



Montana
Office of Public Instruction
Denise Juneau, State Superintendent

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To: School Food Authority Administrators

From: Christine Emerson, Director
School Nutrition Programs



Re: Free and Reduced-Price School Meals Application

The following updated materials for households applying for free or reduced-price meals are available on the School Nutrition Programs website at www.opi.mt.gov/schoolfood/index.html in the School Programs Forms and Guidelines page. These forms are **required** to successfully administer the School Nutrition Programs.

Required forms include:

- Public Release
- Letter to Households (*front and back*) and Instructions for Applying
- Free and Reduced-Price School Meals Application 2012-13 (*front and back*)
- Notice to Households of Approval/Denial of Benefits or Notice of Direct Certification
All households must be notified of their eligibility status. Households who are denied benefits must be given written notification of the denial. The notification must advise the household of the reason for the denial, the right to appeal, instruction on how to appeal, and a statement that they may re-apply for free and reduced price meal benefits at any time during the school year.
- Income Eligibility Guidelines 2012-13

Insert your district's specific information in the **[bold bracketed fields]**. If you make additional changes, you must submit them to the state agency for approval.

Districts must conduct direct certification with SNAP three times during the school year:

- At or around the beginning of the school year;
- Three months after the beginning of the school year; and
- Six months after the beginning of the school year.

The letter method of certifying children for free meals is no longer considered a form of direct certification. Letters can be accepted as categorical eligibility for free meals and will be subject to verification.

Remember these changes as a result of the Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act:

- Schools participating in the School Breakfast Program must inform families of the availability of breakfasts. A notification of the availability of breakfast must be relayed just prior to or at the beginning of the school year in the informational packets that are sent to each household with free and reduced price meal applications for the new school year.
- Foster children are categorically eligible for free meals.
- Only the last four digits of the household adult's Social Security Number must be provided on the application.

The Montana Office of Public Instruction provides vision, advocacy, support, and leadership for schools and communities to ensure that all students meet today's challenges and tomorrow's opportunities.